

Message Text

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PAGE 01 TEL AV 10418 270934Z

16

ACTION NEA-12

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 IO-14 ISO-00 DPW-01 AF-10 CIAE-00

DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04

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FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1018

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

USINT CAIRO

USMISSION GENEVA

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

USMISSION USUN NY

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

C O N F I D E N T I A L TEL AVIV 10418

BEIRUT POUCH BAGHDAD

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR IS XF

SUBJ: GENEVA PEACE CONFERENCE AND ISRAELI MOOD

SUMMARY: WE DETECT LITTLE CHANGE IN ISRAELI SKEPTICISM THAT GENEVA PEACE CONFERENCE WILL RESULT IN BROAD SCALE AREA PEACE. AT SAME TIME, HOWEVER, THERE ARE VAGUE FEELING THAT CONFERENCE MAY IN FACT RESULT IN SOME PROGRESS, WHICH ISRAELIS ARE UNABLE TO DEFINE. FOCUS OF PUBLIC AT THIS POINT IS ON DISENGAGEMENT OF EGYPTIAN AND ISRAELI MILITARY FORCES, WHICH THEY BELIEVE OFFERS HOPE FOR CONCRETE PROGRESS AT GENEVA. SOVIET ROLE HAS ALSO COME UNDER SCRUTINY HERE, WITH GUARDED HOPE BEING EXPRESSED THAT USSR MAY PLAY
CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 02 TEL AV 10418 270934Z

CONSTRUCTIVE ROLE IN PEACEMAKING PROCESS. END SUMMARY.

1. ISRAELI MOOD AFTER OPENING OF GENEVA PEACE CONFERENCE IS BEST CHARACTERIZED AS AMORPHOUS. IN CONVERSATIONS WITH ISRAELIS AND FROM OUR READING OF PRESS, WE DETECT LITTLE OR NO CHANGE IN VIEW HELD BY MAJORITY THAT GENEVA CONFERENCE UNLIKELY TO BRING TYPE OF BROAD SCALE AREA PEACE THAT EBAN CALLED FOR IN HIS OPENING STATEMENT DEC 21. INDEED, SOME ISRAELIS HAVE CHARACTERIZED THAT PARTICULAR CONCEPTION OF PEACE AS A "PIPE DREAM" WHICH HAS NO CHANCE BEING REALIZED.

2. AT SAME TIME, HOWEVER, FACT THAT GENEVA CONFERENCE DID BEGIN HAS HAD POSITIVE EFFECT UPON MOOD OF ISRAELI PUBLIC. THERE IS A VAGUE FEELING THAT "SOMETHING" MIGHT COME OUT OF GENEVA, BUT WHEN PRESSED TO DEFINE MORE EXPLICITLY THEIR EXPECTATIONS, MAJORITY OF PUBLIC IS UNABLE TO DO SO. THERE IS GENERAL AGREEMENT THAT FIRST PRIORITY IS TO WORK OUT AN AGREEMENT WITH EGYPT AND THAT EGYPTIAN-ISRAELI ASPECT OF WHOLE COMPLEX OF PROBLEMS IS MOST AMENABLE TO SETTLEMENT, EVEN THOUGH NO ONE UNDERESTIMATES DIFFICULTIES INVOLVED. CRITICAL FACTOR WHICH ISRAELIS HAVE EXPRESSED TO US IN EXTENT TO WHICH EGYPT CAN ADOPT A POSITION INDEPENDENT OF OTHER ARAB STATES. IF EGYPT CAN DO THIS AND CAN WEATHER INEVITABLE CRITICISM FROM RADICAL VOICES IN ARAB WORLD, THIS WOULD BUTTRESS ISRAELI BELIEF THAT PROGRESS AT GENEVA COULD BE MADE.

3. FOCUS, THEREFORE, AT THIS POINT IN TIME IS ON DISENGAGEMENT TALKS. GUARDED OPTIMISM HAS BEEN EXPRESSED BY DEFENSE MINISTER DAYAN THAT ISRAEL AND EGYPT CAN COME TO AGREEMENT ON DISENGAGEMENT. SPEAKING IN TEL AVIV DEC 25, DAYAN SAID CHANCES ARE "BETTER THAN FIFTY PER CENT THAT THE MILITARY TALKS AT GENEVA CAN ACHIEVE A SEPARATION OF FORCES AND THE SITUATION CAN BE DEFUSED". IF AND WHEN ISRAEL AND EGYPT AGREED ON DISENGAGEMENT, DAYAN THOUGHT SYRIA WOULD THEN JOIN THE TALKS. DAYAN COULD NOT DEFINE, HOWEVER, WHERE EVENTS WOULD GO FROM THERE: "THERE WILL BE NO MORE STALEMATE NOW; THINGS HAVE MOVED INTO A DYNAMIC PHASE...I CANNOT PUT MY FINGER ON IT AND SAY EXACTLY WHY OR EXPLAIN ALL THE REASONS FOR IT."

CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 03 TEL AV 10418 270934Z

4. SOVIET ROLE AT GENEVA HAS ALSO COME UNDER ISRAELI EYE. COMMENTATORS HAVE BEEN CAUTIOUS IN JUDGING SOVIET POSITION BUT HAVE EMPHASIZED SEVERAL POSITIVE NOTES. GROMYKO'S SPEECH AT OPENING SESSION WAS NOT AS HARDLINE AS MANY ISRAELIS HAD EXPECTED. IN ADDITION, EBAN-GROMYKO MEETING DEC 21, WHICH PRESS EMPHASIZED AS FIRST ISRAELI-SOVIET MEETING AT FOREIGN MINISTER LEVEL IN SEVEN YEARS, WAS CHARACTERIZED AS UNUSUALLY FRIENDLY. FINALLY, BOTH PRIME

MINISTER MEIR AND DAYAN HAVE PUBLICLY STATED THAT USSR HAS BEEN ACTIVE ON BEHALF OF ISRAELI POWS IN SYRIA. IT WORTH NOTING THIS IS FAR CRY FROM USUAL ISRAELI TUNE ABOUT SOIVET ROLE; POW'S IN SYRIA CONTINUE TO BE EXTREMELY EMOTIONAL ISSUE, ON WHICH ANYONE'S HELP IS MUCH APPRECIATED, AND MEIR-DAYAN CREDITING OF MOSCOW WITH MUCH HELPFULNESS MAY GO LONG WAY TOWARD IMPROVING USSR'S REPUTATION HERE. ALSO OF INTEREST IS RUMOR CIRCULATING (WE DO NOT KNOW HOW WIDESPREAD IT IS) THAT GOI IMPOSED VERY TIGHT SECURITY CLAMP ON CABINET MEMBERS RE EBAN'S REPORT OF HIS TALK WITH GROMYKO BECAUSE GROMYKO WAS MUCH MORE FORTHCOMING THAN ISRAELIS HAD EXPECTED.
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